

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EB-03 L-01 SP-02 NSC-05
NSCE-00 INR-05 TRSE-00 IGA-02 PRS-01 CIAE-00
INRE-00 SSO-00 /042 W
-----192136Z 092201 /41

O R 192100Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4749
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 8288

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: LOCKHEED SCANDAL-REPORTED USG SUBSTANTIATION OF LEONE
INVOLVEMENT

REF: ROME 8235

1. FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI URGENTLY CALLED IN ACTING
DCM (IN VIEW ABSENCE OF THE AMBASSADOR FROM ROME) LATE AFTERNOON
MAY 19 TO DISCUSS MAY 17 ARTICLE IN WALL STREET JOURNAL
(WSJ) ON LOCKHEED SCANDAL. AS WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON PREVIOUS DAY
(REFTEL), FORLANI STRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OF THE GOVERN-
MENT IN PARTICULARLY DELICATE MOMENT, NOT ONLY BECAUSE LOCKHEED
SCANDAL AGAIN RECEIVING FRONT-PAGE ATTENTION BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY
BECAUSE ARTICLE DIRECTLY LINKED CIA TO LEFEBVRE, WHO IN TURN
LINKED TO PRESIDENT LEONE. FORLANI SPOKE OF "GRAVE SITUATION"
AND POSSIBILITY OF "INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS" INCLUDING NECESSITY
FOR PRESIDENT TO RESIGN.

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2. ACCORDINGLY, FORLANI MADE SPECIFIC REQUEST THAT USG DENY TWO
"BASIC POINTS" IN WSJ ARTICLE: (A) EXISTENCE OF "GOVERNMENT MEMO"
OF MARCH 10, 1976, WHICH FORMED BASIS FOR REMARKS IN ARTICLE ON
ITALY; AND (B) EMPLOYMENT BY USG OF STONE IN MARCH 1976. FORLANI
REALIZES THAT "GOVERNMENT MEMO" IS PROBABLY INTERNAL SEC MEMCON.
HOWEVER, HE BELIEVES IT IMPORTANT THAT IT NOT BE CONFUSED WITH
"CONFIDENTIAL U.S. DOCUMENT", AS REPORTED IN ITALIAN PRESS, AND

THUS HE URGED THAT USG CATEGORICALLY DENY EXISTENCE OF MEMORANDUM. THE POINT TO BE MADE CONCERNING STONE WOULD BE THAT HE HAD LEFT ROME AND HAD RETIRED FROM USG IN 1975; HENCE, ANY ACTIONS IN MARCH 1976 WOULD HAVE BEEN IN A PRIVATE CAPACITY.

3. FORLANI URGED THAT USG MAKE OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THESE TWO POINTS, PREFERABLY IN WASHINGTON BUT OTHERWISE IN ROME, SINCE SOURCE WAS U.S. NEWSPAPER.

4. AT SEVERAL POINTS IN CONVERSATION FORLANI STRESSED NEED FOR URGENCY SO THAT PRESS SPECULATION AND ATTACKS COULD BE NIPPED IN THE BUD. DURING CONVERSATION HE ALSO TELEPHONED PRESIDENT LEONE TO DESCRIBE HIS CONVERSATION WITH ACTING DCM.

5. ACTING DCM ASSURED FORLANI THAT USG FULLY UNDERSTOOD POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WSJ ARTICLE AND ARTICLES IN ITALIAN PRESS BASED ON THEM. HE ALSO ASSURED FOREIGN MINISTER THAT LATTER'S REPRESENTATIONS TO THE AMBASSADOR ON PREVIOUS DAY HAD BEEN IMMEDIATELY CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON AND THAT TODAY'S REQUESTS WOULD BE URGENTLY FORWARDED AS WELL. SPEAKING ON PERSONAL BASIS, ACTING DCM ADVISED THAT USG WOULD CERTAINLY NOT WISH TO PUT ITSELF INTO POSITION WHERE A PRESS CLARIFICATION OR OTHER STATEMENT RESULTED IN FURTHER QUESTIONS AND/OR EFFORTS TO EXTRACT MORE INFORMATION ON LOCKHEED SCANDAL AND ITALIAN ASPECTS THEREOF. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT WASHINGTON MIGHT WISH, RATHER THAN MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENT, TO PROVIDE OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO GOI'S QUERIES THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, WHICH RESPONSE GOI COULD THEN USE PUBLICLY. FORLANI RESPONDED THAT SUCH PROCEDURE WOULD CONSIDERABLY DILUTE ITS USEFULNESS TO GOI.

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6. SHORTLY BEFORE CONVERSATION WITH FORLANI, POLCOUNS RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE QUIRINALE BEZZI, EXPLICITLY CALLING ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT LEONE, TO MAKE SAME REQUEST AS THAT OF FORLANI.

7. LATER IN EVENING MINISTER PIGNATELLI, DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT LEONE, COVERED SAME GROUND IN TELCON WITH ACTING DCM AND ASKED THAT THE AMBASSADOR CONTACT HIM SO THAT HE COULD REPEAT THE PRESIDENT'S CONCERNS AND REQUESTS DIRECTLY TO HIM. PIGNATELLI, ALSO STRESSING URGENT TIME FACTOR, URGED AT MINIMUM THAT USG OFFICIALLY STATE THAT STONE'S EMPLOYMENT WITH USG TERMINATED IN 1975 IN TIME FOR THAT STATEMENT TO APPEAR IN MAY 20 MORNING EDITIONS

8. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY, GOVERNMENT LEADERS, STARTING AT THE VERY TOP, ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED OVER WSJ ARTICLE AND INTERPRETATIONS BEING GIVEN TO IT IN ITALIAN PRESS. THEY ARE ANXIOUS FOR USG ASSISTANCE IN FORM OF DENIAL OF WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE

TWO KEY POINTS. WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO RESULT IS CLEAR USG STATEMENT THAT (A) SINCE STONE HAD SEVERED CONNECTIONS WITH USG SEVERAL MONTHS EARLIER, ANY CONVERSATION BY HIM WITH SEC WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE BEEN MADE IN A PRIVATE CAPACITY AND (B) THAT "GOVERNMENT MEMO" WAS IN NO WAY STATEMENT OF USG POLICY OR OF RESULTS OF ANY USG INVESTIGATION BUT RATHER NOTES TAKEN ON CONVERSATION.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR DENIALS SOONEST.
GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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